

# Orange-Chatham Group Sierra Club

<http://nc.sierraclub.org/ocg/>

P.O. Box 1303, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

## Local Steps toward a Cooler Planet

By Judith Ferster, Conservation Chair

In June 2005, in light of the federal government's refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, the U.S. Conference of Mayors signed the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. Every community that joined the agreement has pledged to work toward the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 7 percent from 1990 levels by 2012. In November of 2008, more than 900 mayors representing 81 million Americans had taken the pledge. In addition, counties, colleges and universities have joined the effort. On April 8, members of the Orange/Chatham Sierra Club group heard Kara Craig, Cool Cities coordinator for the North Carolina chapter, and Pat Carstensen, chapter chair, as they reported on local Cool Cities projects.



Chapel Hill's goal exceeds that of the Mayors' agreement: It commits the town to reduce its emissions by sixty percent by the year 2050, an effort that began with an inventory to set a baseline. Chapel Hill now has a number of projects and programs that cut energy consumption, including an energy efficiency standard for town buildings, an agreement that requires the town to choose low-impact materials such as material made from recycled goods, free buses that carry bicycles, hybrid buses, green vehicles in the town's fleet, light emitting diodes (LEDs) for traffic signals, and a trial of LED street lamps on Franklin Street.

In addition, Chapel Hill will receive \$554,900 from the stimulus package through Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants to decrease total energy consumption and increase economic growth. The Orange/Chatham Sierra Club Group could suggest some projects to use the stimulus money, including:

- **Special Tax Financing Law paired with Municipal Bonds**, which allow a municipality to fund initial costs of neighborhood energy-efficiency and renewable-energy projects while providing a pay-back mechanism through its property taxes;
- **Low Income Energy Efficiency Projects**, which reduce financial strain and promote comfort in low-income homes while also decreasing the emission of greenhouse gases; and
- **LED Expansion**, replacing all remaining incandescent lighting with LEDs throughout municipality operations.

OCG should stay in touch with the town Sustainability Director John Richardson (scheduled to speak at our May meeting) as well as Orange and Chatham county officials to help Cool programs keep the temperature (and greenhouse gas emissions) down even further. If you'd like to help, contact Judith Ferster (see reverse).

Discussion after the presentations touched on the plan proposed by a consortium of environ-



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## Group Events

### Annual Picnic

**Saturday, June 6, 12-2:30 p.m.**

Homestead Park, Chapel Hill

We will celebrate the summer at the picnic shelter at Homestead Park, just west of the intersection of Homestead Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Bring your friends and family. Children are especially welcome. The picnic is potluck. Sierra Club will provide soft drinks, charcoal, hotdogs, burgers and vegan burgers. Please bring frisbees, balls and hats. Don't forget that there is also a new pool for everyone to use. Contact Loren Hintz (see reverse) for more info.

**No group meetings in July or August. Enjoy the summer!**

### Executive Committee Meetings

**Fourth Monday of each month, 7-9 p.m.**

Carolina Meadows

All members are invited. Contact Judith Ferster (see reverse) for more information.

mental organizations (list available at <http://www.ncsavesenergy.org/content/who-part-nc-save-energy>) to create a new entity that would receive proceeds from a \$2 surcharge on utility bills and use it to promote energy conservation for residents, especially those with lower incomes. As of this writing, a bill allowing this arrangement (House Bill 1050) was working its way through the legislature.

An alternative plan would decouple power company profits from the burning of fuel for energy and allow power companies to make profits from projects that decrease energy use and improve efficiency—projects such as those proposed for NC SAVES Energy, those Chapel Hill already does, and those proposed to use stimulus money. There is long-standing distrust of power companies' will or ability to run such programs fairly—Duke Energy's Save-A-Watt program was seen by many environmentalists as over-charging customers for sustainable measures—but there are some successful programs of this sort in other states. For instance, the Vestren Corporation's Conservation Connection in Indiana and Ohio has invested \$10 million and saved customers \$2 million in avoided gas costs since January 2007. The Orange/Chatham Sierra Club Group will keep an eye on the progress of HB 1050 and whether there might also be opportunities for plans that don't create new entities but harness a power company's profit motive directly to conservation and efficiency.



## Outings

Sierra Club outings are open to all. Outings are educational unless designated as a social (S). All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you chose to participate on an outing, please go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

### Current Outings

**OCT 17-25** (Sat-Sun) *Capital Group*. Starting in GA, we will backpack the 100 mile Bartram Trail end-to-end. This trail has much historical significance. Both John & William Bartram spent much time on this trail, classifying and collecting plants from this area, as well as Andre' Michaux, the brilliant French horticulturist who Thomas Jefferson convinced to come to America.

### Controversial permit awarded

*Adapted from Footnotes Online, the newsletter of the North Carolina Sierra Club*

In March, the Perdue administration agreed to declare the massive 800-megawatt Cliffside Coal Boiler Unit 6 a "minor" source of mercury and other hazardous air pollutants. The decision helps Duke Energy avoid stringent federal controls on toxic air emissions for the facility under construction 55 miles west of Charlotte. For context, the emitting capacity exceeds that of a smaller boiler in Virginia by a factor of 20.

In contrast to our state's decision to give Cliffside the go-ahead, South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford recently announced his opposition to a coal plant planned for the Pee Dee River area in Florence County. Back in February, Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm put a virtual moratorium on new coal plants in her state through an executive order. And Governor Jim Doyle of Wisconsin announced that a power plant operated by the University of Wisconsin would begin burning biomass instead of coal.

With the Obama EPA likely to begin the process of regulating CO<sub>2</sub>, the decision is more than unfortunate; it's also a terrible waste of taxpayer/ratepayer money. For more information, read an op-ed by Glen Hooks, Regional Director of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign, at <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/406/story/603137.html>.

Michaux agreed to come for a year but was so taken aback with the plant diversity that he stayed for 18 years. The scenery is as pretty as the AT through this part of N.C.; in fact, it provides a few more vistas. Trip is rated moderate to strenuous, is limited to five and requires a \$50 refundable deposit. Contact Chris David (919-676-8927 or [chrisdavid@bellsouth.net](mailto:chrisdavid@bellsouth.net)).

**International outing.** OCG outings leader Peter Calingaert is leading an outing to northern India in November. For details, explore <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/national/> or contact Peter at [pc@cs.unc.edu](mailto:pc@cs.unc.edu) or (919) 933-5489.

**Watch for additional outings listings on our website.**

**Volunteers needed for Political Committee to help with interviewing candidates for office and making endorsements! Contact Loren Hintz (see below) for more information.**

### What is NC SAVE\$ ENERGY?

*By Olga Grlic, Executive Committee Member*

House Bill 1050 is currently moving through the N.C. legislature. Its purpose is to create an energy-efficiency administrator for the state, independent of the utility companies. NC SAVE\$ ENERGY will collect funds from a small surcharge on utility bills to support energy efficiency and conservation. This represents an opportunity to create new markets for energy-efficiency measures that will help build jobs in North Carolina, improve our national security, strengthen the local economy, improve energy reliability, reduce home energy bills and protect North Carolinians from the damaging effects of recurrent energy price spikes. For more information about the initiative, visit [www.ncsavesenergy.org](http://www.ncsavesenergy.org)

### Orange-Chatham Group Leaders

Executive Committee Members (year indicates end of two-year term)

Loren Hintz (2009) **Group Co-chair and Transportation Chair**  
ldhintz "at" bellsouth.net 933-8987

May Becker (2009) **Group Co-chair** tomatocutter "at" yahoo.com 969-7439

Dave Keesee (2010) **Treasurer** dskeesee "at" bellsouth.net 933-4879

Judith Ferster (2010) **Conservation Chair** judith\_ferster "at" ncsu.edu 929-6648

Jean Westbrook (2009) jtwdrw "at" hotmail.com 542-6212

Matt Scheer (2010) mws21575 "at" yahoo.com 370-4267

Olga Grlic (2010) olgagr "at" duke.edu 968-4318

Other Group Leaders

Jason Baker **Political Chair** jason "at" jasonbaker.us 338-1506

Max Felsher **Newsletter/Web** max.felsher "at" gmail.com 929-8937

Maureen Hayes **Calendar Sales** mchayes720 "at" earthlink.net 933-3140

Paul Jones **Listserv** smalljones "at" gmail.com 360-7740

Annette Jurgelski **Outings** jurge00111 "at" gmail.com 644-0280



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